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## ABSTRACT

This collection profiles 10 outstanding graduates of Pennsylvania adult basic education program (ABE) between the years of 1968 and 1984 and the 10 persons who were selected as outstanding graduates from the class of 1988. The first half of the collection contains biographies of the life and career achievements of the following individuals: a teacher from the class of 1968, a social worker from the class of 1976, a nurse from the class of 1977, a physician from the class of 1978, a college graduate from the class of 1979, a businessman from the class of 1980, a florist's aide from the class of 1981, a dental hygienist from the class of 1982, a homemaker from the class of 1983, and a community leader from the class of 1984. The second half of the collection relates the success stories of the top 10 outstanding graduates of 1988. The biographical sketches emphasize the life hardships that these people had to overcome to complete their respective program of study. (MN)

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## *The Past as Prologue*

On February 4, 1978, at Pennsylvania's 13th Annual Adult Education Midwinter Conference, the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Division of Adult and Community Education presented the First Adult Education Student-of-the-Year Awards. This recognition activity was initiated by Ethel Matthews, former Chief of PDE's Division of Adult and Community Education. Joining her in developing SUCCESS STORIES were Sarah Hubert, then research assistant, Advance, Pennsylvania's Adult Education Clearinghouse, and Eugene Madeira, former Director of the Lancaster Enrichment Center and Presidential Appointee to the National Advisory Council for Adult Education.

Each year for the past decade, ten outstanding Adult Basic Education (ABE-GED) students have been selected from the more than 25,000 adults enrolled yearly in classes sponsored by Pennsylvania Department of Education's Division of ABE. The awards ceremony has become an annual feature at the legislative luncheon held as an integral part of Midwinter Conference. SUCCESS STORIES has been described by staff of the U.S. Department of Education as encouraging adult student enrollment and has been copied by states, like New York, as a model public awareness program.

SUCCESS STORIES: PAST AND PRESENT will not only salute the 1988 students-of-the-year; it will also update the stories of ten previous winners. Their lives demonstrate that adults learn much more than literacy, basic education, English as a second language (ESL), GED-preparation, employability or life skills from adult education teachers and tutors. Adult education is not merely a second chance; it is a call to action.

*Success Stories*  
1978 • 1988

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*Success Stories*  
1978 1988

PAST



*Success Stories*  
1978 • 1988



*It's like having two jobs; your home job and your job trying to get a high school diploma. It's difficult!*

## Barbara Drew Teacher

Barbara Drew knows very well what it means to work two jobs at once. She has worked day and night nearly all her life. Though she stands four feet eleven and weighs only ninety pounds, Barbara is a heavyweight when it comes to adult education. Twenty years ago, she earned her GED from the Erie School District. Ten years ago, she was hired as an English teacher in Erie's Adult Learning Center. In 1987, she was named Erie's Adult Teacher of the Year. Along the way, Barbara managed to raise three children, graduate from Gannon College, work in a shop and serve as an adult education volunteer and teacher's aide.



No one can carry such a load alone. Married as a teenager and divorced in her twenties, Barbara gives credit for her success "to my mother because she helped me with the children and believed in me." Having been there herself, Barbara understands that adults need

*Class of*

**1968**

support as much as they need instruction. "My heart goes out to adults who decide they want to come back to school. You have to give them incentive. You tell them: 'You can do it.'"

This dynamo says simply, "My life is quite busy." Apart from family and work, she finds time to golf, bowl in a league, exercise daily at the YMCA, teach in an Upward Bound program and work in the Center's night school.

In September 1987, for the first time in nine years, Barbara did not begin the school term as an adult education teacher. Instead, she is teaching ninth grade English at a junior high school.

**1978 Adult Basic Education Outstanding Student  
Sponsored by: Erie Adult Learning Center**

*Success Stories*  
1978 1988



*My job is to help others  
not to make some  
of the mistakes that I've  
made, and it's rewarding.*

## **James LaBell**

### **Social Worker**

A graduate of Philadelphia Community College, a psychiatric social worker for the Northwestern Institute and a Faith Baptist minister with his own small congregation, Jim LaBell has come a long way in the past decade. In 1976, when he committed himself to Eagleville Hospital as a drug and alcohol patient, he was reading at a fourth-grade level. Going through the ABE program while in treatment, he decided that "if I was to function in society, I needed to get my education."



One year later, he was discharged from Eagleville, had passed the GED and was enrolled in college. By 1982, Jim completed his mental health social service degree. He took two courses each semester while working as a psychiatric aide at St. Luke's and then, as a therapist, at



Eagleville. Next on his agenda was a master's degree. Jim was accepted at the University of Pennsylvania on the basis of his work portfolio. Carrying four credits and a full workload, without having taken undergraduate preparation courses, just proved too difficult.

Adult education not only provides a pathway to success but instills the self-assurance that difficulties and even failures can be overcome. Jim was disappointed but not defeated. A few years later, he returned to school. Completing the continuing education program at the Philadelphia College of the Bible, he became a minister. After serving as an associate minister, he has opened his own church with a few adults and a great many children.

Reflecting on the past, Jim said: "I'm 48 years old and for well over 20 years, it was like I was going down hill. Without getting a good education, you stumble and fall. Through all my drug and alcohol years, the Lord protected me. All the worst things that happened to me have been turned around to be a blessing. And each day of my life I'm giving it back. These last ten years have been most rewarding."

**1982 Adult Basic Education Outstanding Student**  
**Sponsored by: Eagleville Reading Academy**

*Success Stories*  
1978 • 1988



*No one can give you inner character, inner development, inner abilities, but you. But someone can show you the way.*

## **Barbara Sobolusky**

### **Nurse**

After attaining her GED, Barbara Sobolusky was accepted in the LPN degree program at the prestigious Jefferson School of Nursing. Ever since she graduated from Jefferson in 1979, she has been a surgical and staff floor nurse at the American Oncological Hospital. The average nurse remains at this hospital fifteen to eighteen months. Asked how she could endure the stress of eight years of dealing with cancer patients, Barbara credits the difficulties she has had to overcome in her own life.



Raised in the Lumbee Indian culture, Barbara was married at fifteen, one year after her family moved to Philadelphia. Ten years later, when the youngest of her three children entered school, Barbara went into a severe depression. Unable to balance her total dependency

*Class of*

**1977**

against her desire to do something with her life, she sought escape from reality in alcohol. "After three years of insanity, including two suicide attempts," Barbara entered a rehabilitation program. With the help of caring therapists, she began the slow climb to independence. The GED was the first step along the way.

Barbara points out that she "came from a total dependence on my husband, my background and my family. As a direct result of that GED program, I grew into a woman who has a very good job, respectable, my own home, my own car." Her teachers acted as examples, pointed out her better traits and helped her overcome a lack of self esteem. "Without their expertise, their gentleness, their persistence and their encouragement, I would never have been prepared to stand the rigorous training demanded."

Barbara Sobolusky's desire for learning has not lessened. Despite demanding hours at the hospital, she is always engaged in new learning projects. She believes that the more she learns, the more she can help others. She has recently completed a year-long course in dyslexia and volunteers her assistance in this area as well as continuing to counsel drug and alcohol patients.

**1978 Adult Basic Education Outstanding Student**  
**Sponsored by: United American Indians of Delaware Valley**

*Success Stories*  
1978 • 1988



*These classes were so good that I was able to take the test to work as a physician in a relatively short period of time.*

## **Dr. Mieczyslaw Weinfeld**

### **Physician**

In 1976, Dr. Mieczyslaw (Mitch-i-slav) Weinfeld came to America from Poland. Today, he is a United States citizen. Ten years ago, Dr. Weinfeld struggled to make ends meet, living on part-time jobs and public assistance. Today, he has a private practice. In 1977, he was a student in the Allegheny Intermediate Unit's adult program, devoting all his energy to learning English so he could pass the TOEFEL test of English



proficiency and obtain his intern license. One decade later, he teaches internal medicine at the University of Pittsburgh.

Two weeks after passing the TOEFEL, Mieczyslaw began his internship at McKeesport Hospital. In 1979, he became a resident in internal medicine at Shadyside Hospital. In 1982, he went into private practice as a certified internist.

Dr. Weinfeld is not your average physician. He makes house calls! "I did it in Poland and I didn't change." Devoted to helping patients become responsible for their own health, Dr. Weinfeld offers free blood pressure checks in his office. He tells his graduate students that "fixing problems just with medication is wrong thinking. Every physician is an educator," he insists and teaches his patients to change their lifestyles. "I like to spend a lot of time in activity of the fresh air. That's what I recommend to patients and myself."

His wife, Anna, accompanies him on his long walks. When Mieczyslaw left Poland, Anna, then his girl friend, was still a student. For eight years, they wrote to each other. When Anna graduated from medical school, she was not allowed to leave Poland. Then, in January 1985, she finally came to the United States and they were married. History repeats itself. Dr. Weinfeld confides: "Anna is going to Allegheny IU adult classes like I did."

**1979 Adult Basic Education Student of the Year**  
**Sponsored by: Allegheny Intermediate Unit**

*Success Stories*  
1978 1988



*Ninety percent of us  
don't want to be on welfare.  
You exist on welfare. You don't  
live on welfare.*

## **Kathy McManus**

### **College Graduate**

Kathy McManus is a former welfare mother of three who graduated with honors from Harcum Junior College, June 1987. Her path from 1979 GED student to Harcum Dean's List is the result of her selection as a 1985 outstanding ABE Student of the Year. At ceremonies in the mayor's office, she was given a citation and offered a scholarship to Harcum by a member of the Philadelphia Commission on Literacy.



Kathy hesitated. "I can't go back to college. I am 35 years old. How can I go back to school full time with my kids?" Besides, she thought: "We're talking about a Main Line College here. I'm from a very poor working class background. What would I have in common with all these rich kids? Who would I talk to?"

*Class of*

**1979**

With encouragement from her friends and teachers at the Womens' program, Kathy decided to try it. After all, since 1980, she had been a leader of Kensington's education task force and a member of the advisory board for Edison High School. She stood at the very center of the fight to improve schooling in Philadelphia. She would now stand up for her own education.

Kathy found Harcum very different than she had expected. "I made friends very easily there. I loved meeting new people and hearing new ideas." Her economics professor recognized Kathy had much to teach the class. He would rile her about people on welfare with Cadillacs and Kathy would reply: "Now, wait a minute, ninety percent of my friends are on welfare and we are lucky if we have enough money to throw a birthday party for our kids." He gave her a 95% on her final paper and suggested she go into social studies.

At graduation, Kathy received a national communications arts award. This skill has stood her in good stead. After hearing her talk at a "We, The People" celebration, the president of Fidelity Bank offered her a job. She is now working in the Trust File Division of Fidelity and looks forward to many happy years there.

**1985 Adult Basic Education Student of the Year**  
**Sponsored by: Lutheran Settlement House**  
**Women's Program**

*Success Stories*  
1978 1988

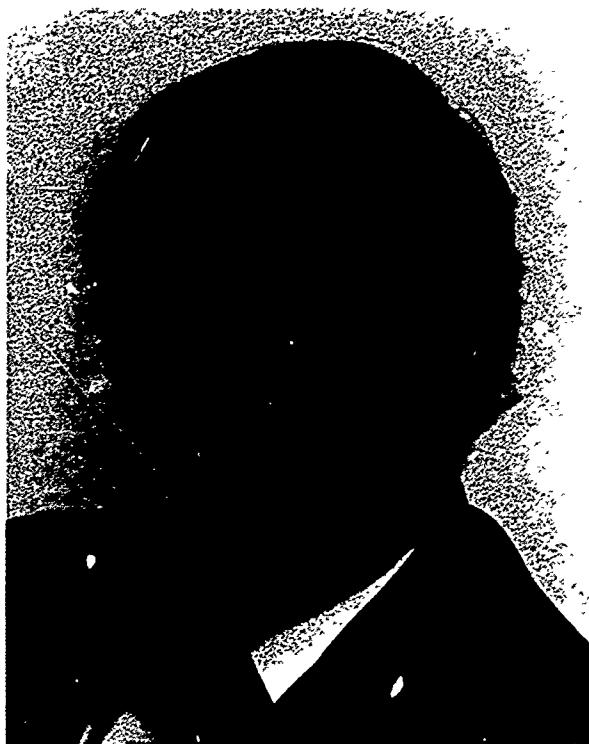


*The first night in class was the hardest thing I ever did. My teacher went the extra mile. It made all the difference.*

## **William Tilley**

### **Businessman**

In 1980, Bill Tilley had a steady job as a maintenance employee for Ziegler Brothers, a specialty feed company. But Bill, who had previously worked as a stockboy, taxi driver, horse farm manager and legman for the Japanese Equestrian Team at the Montreal Olympics, wanted more out of life. Though "terrified to go back to school," he enrolled in Lincoln Intermediate Unit's GED program. After he overcame his initial fears, Bill's hunger for learning was such that one semester just wasn't enough. Though his teachers believed Bill was ready for the GED that June, he elected to take the fall semester and passed the test in October 1980. "Hang in there. It's worth everything you put into it," is his advice to would-be adult learners.





*Class of*

**1980**

Bill has continued learning ever since. Learning builds confidence. As Bill began offering quiet suggestions for improving maintenance, his employers recognized his abilities and made him head of the department. The past seven years have been good ones. A series of promotions has gone hand-in-hand with added training, responsibilities and salary increases.

Today Bill travels extensively throughout the United States and Canada as an Aquaculture Equipment Consultant Specialist. "That's fish farming," he explains. "Right now the big thing is growing caged salmon in the ocean." Bill modestly admits that he was responsible for the purchase of the first equipment from Germany. He worked on it in his spare time, learned how to operate it, and now demonstrates this new technology to Ziegler customers.

Married two years ago, Bill and his wife, Susan, are building a new house for their three children, Laurie, Stacey and Jeanna. As if family, house and job weren't challenge enough, Bill adds, "I am now looking for my next project. I like to keep growing."

**1982 Adult Basic Education Student of the Year**  
**Sponsored by: Lincoln Intermediate Unit**

*Success Stories*  
1978 • 1988



*A GED is harder than going to school. It made me feel so good when I passed that I talk about it to this day.*

## **Lenna Allen Bruch**

### **Florist's Assistant**

In 1976, married with five children, Lenna was sentenced to Muncy State Correctional Institution. She believes "the chance to improve myself" kept her going through six years of confinement. Fractions gave her trouble but determination led her from basic studies to passing the GED. Her poems and cartoons were published by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. She also learned to type, took college credits in music, biology, sociology and completed a food service program.



Five years after her release, Lenna counts up her gains and losses. She was divorced in prison and her baby adopted out. In 1982, released in the care of her brother, she had to leave her four children with their father. There was just no place for them with her working

*Class of*

**1981**

full-time for a foliage company and taking care of her brother's home and children. Lenna married Clarence Bruch in August 1986. Three months later, the couple bought a house, which Lenna describes proudly as "well fixed up."

Life isn't easy. Lenna is still paying off a restitution of \$3,000. Until last March when she was laid off, she paid out part of her salary each month from her job in a greenhouse and flower shop. Now Clarence, who has worked as a janitor for seventeen years, contributes \$10 to \$20 monthly. Lenna says: "Sometimes, I don't know how we make ends meet. But I have a good husband. He and I get along. We have a home that's ours. If I want to plant a tree, I can. My oldest daughter, Angela, just came for a visit. She lives in North Dakota. I see the other children more often."

Lenna Bruch's story is typical of many GED students. What they gain from adult education is not always the chance to go to college, enter an profession or even hold a well-paying job. Her achievement lies in renewed self-esteem. With faith in herself, she is able to enjoy the small pleasures of the present and face both past and future.

**1981 Adult Basic Education Student of the Year  
Sponsored By: Muncy State Correctional Institute**

*Success Stories*  
1978 • 1988



*Getting a GED opens doors for you. I'm into things now that I had no idea that I would ever be. It's been mainly in the job world.*

## **Anita Roberts**

### **Dental Hygienist**

For Anita Roberts, the GED was just a beginning. Six years later, this vibrant mother and grandmother is still in school, studying to become an insurance agent while working days as a dental hygienist. In her "spare" time, she counsels patients at a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. Anita, who just filed her certification papers as an Alcoholics Anonymous counselor, explains that running the group is "my most emotionally rewarding work right now."



In dealing with the recovery process, Anita shares her own experiences. As a young mother with an unstable husband and seven children to support, she learned about alcohol "the hard way." At 38, Anita realized it was crucial to get a job and "the only way was through

*Class of*

**1982**

education which I didn't have." In January 1982, she enrolled in the Philadelphia Board of Education's adult classes. Just two months later, she earned her GED. By 1983, Anita had completed McCaries School of Health Science and Technology and was certified as a dental assistant. She then attended Philadelphia Community College.

"Education is priceless; that's for sure," Anita insists. "It gives you a beginning. The one really big thing is how it made me feel about myself. By never finishing school you feel as if you lost something. The GED gives you a feeling of completion, of confidence and self-worth, that I had accomplished something. I feel like it unlocks so many doors for you; not just me, anybody."

Anita's talent and accomplishments are not limited to education. Recently, she got a singing group together with her three sisters. They were on a talent show; did another program; and now they have a Motown video. There's just no telling what doors will swing open next!

**1983 Adult Basic Education Student of the Year**  
**Sponsored by: Philadelphia Board of Education**

*Success Stories*  
1978 • 1988



*I like to learn.  
My ambition is to learn  
as much as I can.*

## **Hyang Robinson Homemaker**

"I had a big dream that I wanted to be lots of things," Hyang Robinson confided. Despite the fact she can't afford to go to college and there is little work in her small community, she continues to learn. "I learn at home," she said. "I learn some out of books and some from professionals who do and I watch."

Hyang keeps house for her husband, who works a seven-day swing shift, and their children, Jeni and Nolan.

Her latest learning project has been to build an addition to their home. "I do carpentering. I know how to do roofing job, electric wiring, lay the floors, walls, paneling. My husband helped me nail it up in the high places. The rest of it, I did it all. The plumbing is not that hard. Everything is simple once you get to know it."



*Class of*

**1983**

Hyang's confidence and willingness to rise to any challenge was apparent to her teachers in Tunkhannock School District. She enrolled in the ABE program in January 1983 and by May passed her GED test. Hyang recalls her early days in the United States. "When I came over from Korea, I was a little kid. I didn't know anything at all. It's a different culture, different food, you have to have a vehicle to go around. I learned everything over here." Besides her newly acquired building skills, Hyang's English is near letter perfect. She drives a car and has learned aerobics well enough to teach others.

Two years ago, one of Hyang's many dreams did come true. She went back to Korea to visit her family. "They are still living day by day," she says, but adds proudly, "My last brother and sister are at home with my mother. They are in college. They had a chance to learn." If they are anything like Hyang, they will be lifelong learners.

**1984 Adult Basic Education Student of the Year  
Sponsored by: Tunkhannock Area School District**

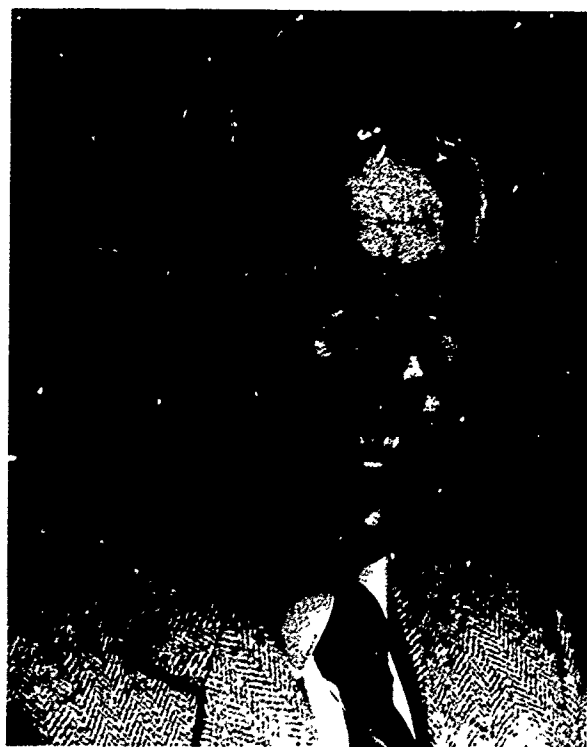
*Success Stories*  
1978 1988



*I gained because I found out that  
I had a great deal of knowledge  
I didn't know I had until the time  
came to bring it out in class.*

## Jerome Rosenberg Community Leader

Jerry Robinson, a retired shoe store manager and community leader, entered adult classes to fulfill a promise. After working as a volunteer with the Office of Aging, he was offered a full-time job at the Crawford County Senior Center as a counselor with the Older Worker Employment Program. There, he helped senior citizens write resumes and prepare for interviews. As Jerry puts it: "What I did was draw out from people what they would like to do, where they would like to work and how they could best go about finding a job."



One condition of the job was that Jerry get a high school diploma. In September 1983, he entered the PENNCREST GED program. Although he left school for health reasons more than fifty years before,



*Class of*

**1984**

a lifetime of interest in books and learning had kept his mind alert. Most of the work seemed easy, and Jerry spent much of his time helping and encouraging other students. In January 1984, he passed the test.

Since that time, Jerry's life has not slowed down at all. While attending a counseling workshop at a national convention, Jerry met Shirley, who was engaged in similar work. Their courtship, which began with a supper among friends, concluded when Shirley moved from Florida to Pennsylvania to marry Jerry in January 1987. They are rarely at home. Shirley, who is a talented musician, is busy with her world. Jerry goes his own way. "I do my work and she does hers," he says.

Jerry's work has changed considerably since 1984. When his counseling job went from full-time to part-time and then was phased out because of funding problems, Jerry used the skills he had taught others to develop a new job. He is now working with a major medical-supply company to open a retail store in the area. "It's a good, very competitive business," says Jerry. With his senior center contacts, his enthusiasm and his dedication to work, this most youthful senior citizen is sure to succeed.

**1986 Adult Basic Education Student of the Year**  
**Sponsored by: PENNCREST School District**

*Success Stories*  
1978 • 1988

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1988

*Success Stories*  
1978 1988



*When my husband was killed,  
I thought my life was over.  
With the help of the GED,  
my dreams are just beginning.*

## Rita Jean Nash

Rita Jean Nash quit school in 1968, while she was in the eighth grade. At the age of 15, Rita's life changed from a happy-go-lucky teenager to a mother who suddenly had the responsibility for raising a newborn child. Once her child was born, Rita enrolled in a neighborhood youth corps program where she was able to attend school part of the day. Through the agency, she was sent to a business school where she learned basic secretarial skills. She really liked her secretarial training but had to drop out because of her daughter's poor health.



At twenty, Rita married James Nash, Sr. and the next six years were happy ones for Rita. She no longer placed her career as a top priority and was content to stay at home with her family. Then

tragedy struck. On February 4, 1979, Rita's husband was killed. At twenty-five, she was left to raise three children, all under eleven years old. Rita had to again put her educational dreams on the back burner to make sure the family didn't fall apart because of her husband's unexpected death.

After eight years of raising the children, Rita felt they were old enough for her to act upon her dream of becoming an executive secretary. She took the first big step by enrolling in GED evening courses at the Greater Johnstown Area Vocational Technical School. She didn't miss any classes and was an active student throughout the three months of classroom studies.

In April 1987, Rita Nash passed the GED. That September, she was accepted into a ten-week JTPA training program. She worked in an office environment where she learned various procedures associated with secretarial work. She practiced her typing and speed-writing skills at least four hours every day. On November 1, 1987, she was accepted into one of the best business colleges in Pennsylvania. She will take an eighteen month Executive Secretary curriculum. Her twenty-one year old dream is about to come true.

**Greater Johnstown Area Vocational Technical School**  
**Sponsors: Samuel L. Hart & Chris Lunt**

*Success Stories*  
1978 1988



*I'm going to go  
right on learning.  
I want to become a nurse.*

## Bonnie Starcher

Bonnie was just fifteen years old when she left home, fleeing an alcoholic father who was becoming more and more violent. Even at that age, she displayed initiative and perseverance by finding an apartment and taking a full time job. Unable to continue her schooling and work full time, she dropped out.

At eighteen, she became pregnant and had a daughter, Jammie. Jammie developed kidney and ear problems making it difficult for Bonnie to work full time, give her child the extra attention she needed and pay all the expenses. She solved this problem by taking a job as a nurse's aide to a quadriplegic enabling her to care for both Jammie and her patient. But a work schedule of seven 24-hour days at work and seven days off leaves little time for schooling.



When Bonnie was laid off last year, she decided it was time to go on to nurse's training. She entered the PENNCREST Adult Education program in June 1987 and by September earned her GED. Bonnie faced many difficult tasks during that period. When she saw her fifteen year old brother facing the same home situation she had fled, she took him into her house. She attended morning classes five days a week, worked odd jobs at night and cared for her daughter and her brother. Yet she never missed a class and gave her time to help others.

Now awaiting acceptance into a JTPA nursing program, Bonnie is active in a volunteer fire company and the local Follies, a group which performs and donates the money they earn to community agencies and hospitals. Her greatest service may be that she opens her home to her brother's friends on weekends. Here she provides a meeting place, without drugs or alcohol. She discusses problems and helps give direction to the youngsters. Above all, she stresses the importance of staying in school in order to succeed.

**PENNCREST School District**  
**Sponsor: Dale Hrach**

*Success Stories*  
1978 • 1988



*My kids were getting bigger.  
I was running out of games.  
I had some choosing to do.*

## Linda L. Garnett

Linda's mother died at a young age, and, after completing eighth grade, Linda found herself pregnant and literally homeless. She quit school, lied about her age to get on welfare and began to "play house" in an apartment she found. After trying and quitting adult classes because she couldn't keep up, Linda began playing games about reading. She had her twin sister go along to any appointment that required reading.



She speaks of the fall of 1986 as a time of depression, not caring how she looked, giving up, hitting the bottom. She says: "I was tired of getting high and I was getting caught up in hells I didn't want. My kids were getting bigger. I was running out of games. I had some choosing to do. Did I want to be an alkie, a junkie, an unfit mother? Was there any way out of the traps?"



Linda found the way. One day, the welfare worker gave her a form to sign when her sister wasn't present. Linda shoved it away, sobbing: "I can't read that." Angry with herself, she looked up and saw a sign that said "Can You Read?" and a telephone number for the Delaware County Literacy Council. It took all the courage she had to make an appointment.

In October 1986, Linda was at the third-grade level. One year later, she reads beyond seventh grade, has a part time job, and is learning to drive. She has enrolled in an ABE program and is looking forward to getting a GED, becoming a tutor and going to college for public relations.

Linda's strength and leadership have already been recognized by family, peers and the local community. She reads with her children and encourages them to know "that they have a chance and they should go out and fight for what they want to be." She has brought four adults in for tutoring and helped to hold another four in the program. She is active in tutor training and assists in materials selection. Her honest and powerful talks at literacy events have generated newspaper coverage for the program and won new respect among business and community leaders for the non-reading adult.

**The Delaware County Literacy Council**  
**Sponsor: Kathleen Adams**

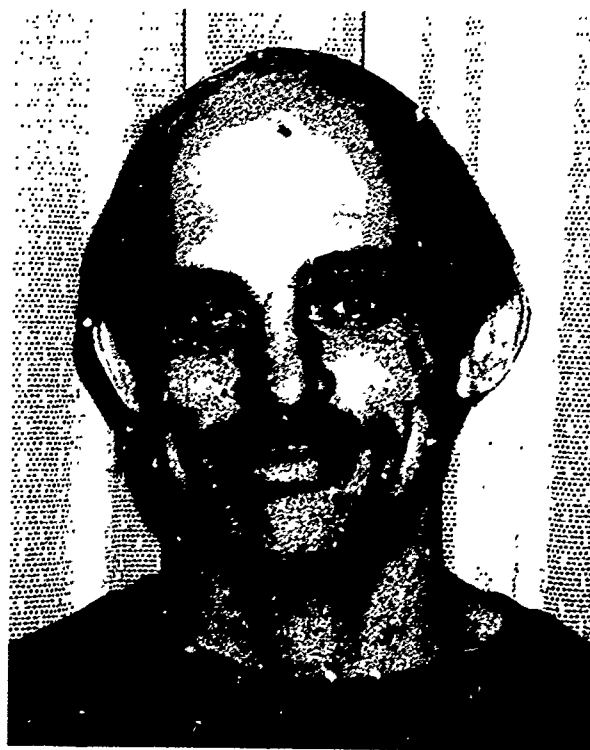
*Success Stories*  
1978 1988



*No way! I can never learn algebra. But the more I learned, the better I felt.*

## Gordon I. Price

Gordon Price came from an alcoholic family and started drinking at nine. His alcohol problems and low self-esteem were the reasons he dropped out of school after eighth grade. Gordon worked a few jobs, got in trouble with the law and joined the Army. After two years, a history of insubordination, going AWOL and time in the brig, he received a "general discharge." He then went to work as a laborer but kept getting into trouble because of his poor attitude and drinking problem.



Gordon went through two marriages and was in and out of mental hospitals. He felt "worthless" and attempted suicide several times while drinking. For the past ten years, he has been employed by the Di-Anne Underwear Company, who kept him on, even though he missed a lot of work. Arrested in 1986 for driving under the influence,

Judge Walter sentenced him to attend the Lebanon Adult Education Center to work toward his GED.

Arriving at the adult center with a chip on his shoulder, he just planned to put in time to please the judge. But Gordon didn't count on the determination of his teacher, Sue Rusen, and his volunteer tutor, Andrew Young, who encouraged him until he succeeded in mastering fractions. Algebra was next, "No way. I can never do algebra," Gordon said. But learn he did and it felt so good. The more he learned, the better he felt about himself.

When Gordon got his diploma in April 1987, he realized that he could do better. It gave him drive and also made him feel that he did not need alcohol. He is no longer a chronic clock watcher at work. Now he believes the kind of job he does reflects on the kind of person he is. Gordon enjoys reading now and would like to get more schooling. He is particularly interested in human relations.

He spends time counseling kids who drop out of school and people in trouble with the law. He tells them it is not really hopeless, that they can get out of their rut. Gordon is currently president of the GED alumni association and is always promoting adult education and the importance of a high school diploma.

**The Lebanon Adult Education Center**  
**Sponsor: Joan Heisey**

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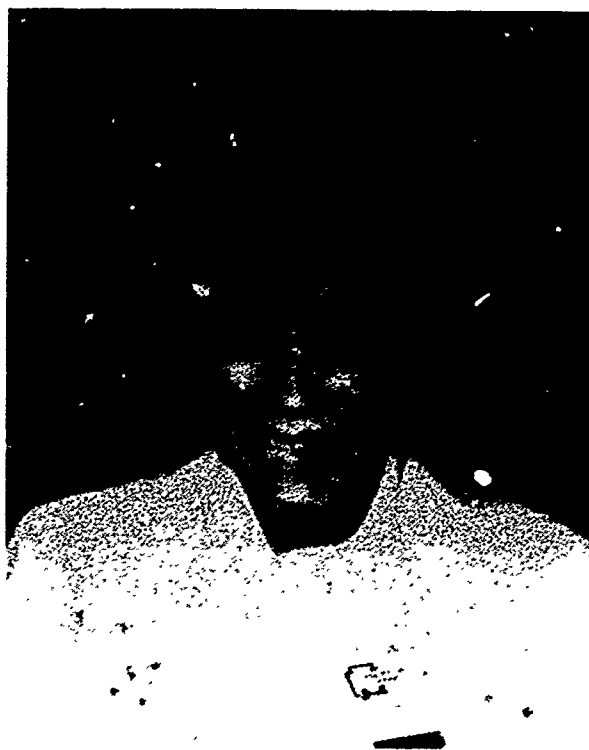


*I've come such a long way;  
a GED, a college degree,  
a really good job... Lots of  
people have helped along the way.*

## Joyce Evans

Joyce Evans left school at the end of eighth grade because of an unexpected pregnancy. Over twenty years ago, it was not a common occurrence to continue in school while pregnant. She began to feel pressure from both students and teachers, so she dropped out.

In March 1984, eighteen years after dropping out of school, an exceptional and highly motivated woman entered the adult literacy program run by the Luzerne Intermediate Unit. Her initial test scores were low but she worked very hard to bring them up to GED level. In addition to attending class, Joyce had the added responsibility of caring for her family, which included three children. She often did extra assignments and volunteered to help less-talented students with their work.



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After passing the GED, Joyce enrolled in Luzerne County Community College (LCCC). She majored in the Dietetic Technician Program and completed an associates degree in that field. During her college years, Joyce was on the Dean's List, the Committee for Special Project Students, and was twice nominated for the Special Program Student of the Year Award by the Pennsylvania Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel. She won the award in 1986, the second time she was nominated.

Joyce is currently a member of the Alumni Association of LCCC. She is employed as the supervisor of a food services department at Pleasant Valley Manor in Stroudsburg. Joyce's dreams did not stop with that associate degree. She plans to continue her education and attain a college degree, so that she may become the manager of a food services facility.

**Luzerne Intermediate Unit**  
**Sponsors: Frank Wascalis & Frank Nardone**

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*I'm still working  
and struggling; but now  
it's for the future.*

## Majorie Aguilar

Although Majorie had completed eleventh grade when she dropped out of school, it took her nearly twenty years to find her way back. At seventeen, Majorie became pregnant, and after the birth of her child, she took on a demanding job at a factory. Since then, she has been on her own, supporting her family.

The day she telephoned Tuscarora Intermediate Unit's adult center, she was at a low point in her life. A mental health client, she was unemployed, on assistance, and her children weren't living with her. She was told to come right over — and she did, walking. Transportation to class has been a continual problem for Majorie. Rain or shine, when she had to walk to get to class, she did. She probably has more mileage to her credit than any other center participant to date.



Because she did not have support or encouragement from her family, Majorie had to count on her friends at the center and the mental health program to keep her going. Recognizing that "we all do need each other," the friendship and encouragement she gave others made her a leader in her class. Though she completed GED testing in January 1987, graduating with honors, Majorie has continued to attend class to improve her writing skills.

In May 1987, after getting a part-time job at Weis Markets, she enrolled in Central Penn Business School in Summerdale. "I chose accounting because, working with the ABE program, I realized I liked working with figures and math," she said. She plans to complete an associate degree and hopes to find a position in that field. One day, she will earn her bachelor's degree in accounting.

Majorie has not forgotten the lessons she learned in ABE and has formed a support group for nontraditional students at her business school. A member of the local GED Alumni Association, she recruits students for the center and gave the address at the June awards ceremony. Her outlook is optimistic. She says that she is still "working and struggling — but now it's for the future. The ABE program is something that changed my life."

**Tuscarora Intermediate Unit  
Sponsor: Carol Molek**

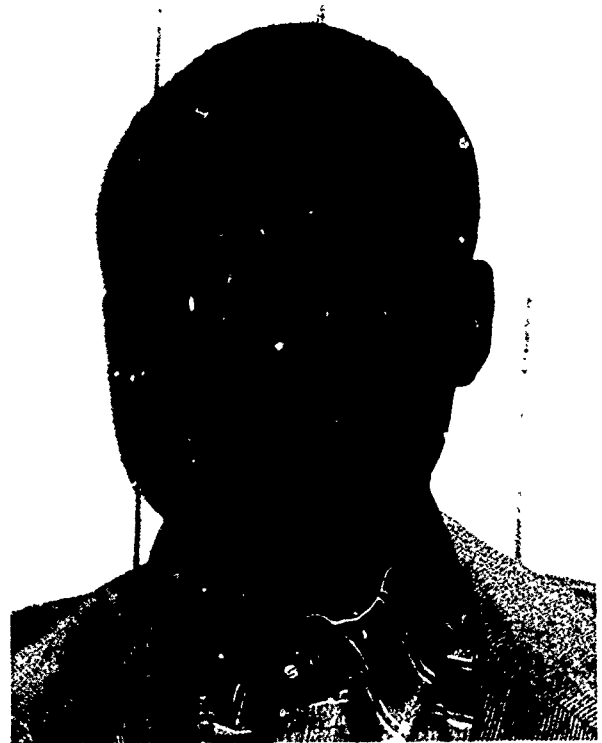
*Success Stories*  
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*I am so grateful to those  
who lent a hand along the way.  
None of this could have been done  
without the help of the Lord.*

## Iverian Johnson

At age five, Iverian Johnson was introduced to alcohol. At age fourteen, he had graduated to cough syrup and marijuana, and by twenty-one, hallucinogens, heroin and methamphetamine. The alcoholic family that was amused by a five year old's drinking could not control his antisocial behavior at twelve and he was removed to a group home. For the next four years, Iverian was shifted from one home to another. At



age sixteen, he left the system and the ninth grade with few skills and little, if any, interest in learning.

Iverian found himself in the Marines at seventeen and served during the Vietnam conflict. His addiction progressed and his education stayed on hold. Honorably discharged at twenty-one, the following years found him married, separated, and the father of three. At thirty-four,



he realized his life was going nowhere. In January 1985, he entered Eagleville Rehabilitation Center and, as part of his treatment, was assigned to a GED class.

School held no interest. He tried to escape by retreating inside, falling asleep in class. One day, he even left early after writing, "I quit," on the board. But, of course, he didn't quit. He mastered the math problems that were difficult and the English that seemed like a foreign language. The pride he felt when he passed the GED in May 1985 was the first positive achievement in his sobriety.

In September 1985, Iverian completed his treatment and moved out into the community. He is now a student at a local community college, having completed thirty-eight credits in human services. He also holds down a job as a resident advisor for mentally dysfunctional adults in a community living arrangement. His goal is to work with adolescent children, giving them the love and encouragement he never received at their age.

Iverian recognizes that every day is a struggle but no longer has any thoughts of quitting. He has not forgotten those who lent a hand along the way. He is grateful to them and believes that none of this would have been accomplished without the help of the Lord.

**Eagleville Hospital  
Sponsor: Kathleen Marks**

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*Once I realized that  
other people were wrong  
about my abilities, that I really  
could learn, there was no stopping me.*

## Suzanne Brown

Shy, unassertive and blind since birth, Suzanne was placed in a residential school where she was diagnosed as retarded. She was retained in kindergarten for three years and told she could not master Braille, the system of reading and writing so vital to blind students. Not questioning the diagnosis, her parents transferred her to a school for visually impaired, mentally retarded students which stressed personal, self-care skills at the expense of any intellectual stimulation.



From age eight to twenty-one, Suzanne remained at that school, learned Braille, learned to sing and play the piano and learned to count to 100. After a short stay at a rehabilitation center where she was taught to do laundry and use a cane, she returned to school to live and work,

answering phones and supervising piano practice. Never counseled about her future, she floundered in a society that defined her as a helpless blind person who needed to be sheltered.

In 1974, Suzanne went to live at a boarding home for visually impaired adults. She ran the home's elevator, learned to knit and tried a GED study course. Frustrated with its inadequacies, she gave up until 1987. Then, contacted by an outreach member of the Philadelphia Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, she enrolled in their GED program for print-handicapped adults. Her first job was to overcome years and years of other people's doubts about her ability.

Much of the social studies, science and math materials were new to Suzanne and she was not accustomed to the discipline involved in completing demanding assignments. English was her strength. She soon gained confidence in her thinking skills. With that came the ability to deal with those who criticized her for studying. Employing Braille tape recorders, she passed four of the GED tests June 1987 and is currently working on the fifth.

Shortly after enrolling in GED classes, Suzanne was selected as secretary of the local chapter of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind and is now its president. She has not only surmounted her own longstanding academic deficits and lack of self esteem, but is able to share her competence and confidence with others.

**Library of the Blind and Physically Handicapped**  
**Sponsor: Alysia Zee**

*Success Stories*  
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*When we read together,  
we share our feelings;  
we know that we can build  
a better life, a better world.*

## Sylvia Jenkins

When Sylvia fell behind other students at school, her “extra help” consisted of standing in the corner wearing a dunce cap. Transferred to another school, the large, undisciplined classes seemed “a big party” and it was easy to be undisciplined too. Sylvia repeated third grade and was placed in special education. Passed on from year to year in a class with retarded kids, handicapped kids, discipline problems and slow learners,



she fell further and further behind. At sixth grade, the oldest and tallest in her class, she was sent to a trade school where racial tensions made going to school each day an exercise in fear. Sylvia dropped out; she was seventeen.

For ten years, she lived with her family taking an occasional job that didn't require reading or writing. She grew impatient at learning

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everything from television and suspicious that people were trying to take advantage of her. In 1982, as a step toward independence, she enrolled in an evening high school but it didn't work out any better than the first time. Sylvia spent two more years in front of the TV. Then, in 1984, Sylvia called The Center for Literacy after seeing it profiled on a television public affairs program.

Her tutor not only gave her the individual instruction she needed, but helped her develop the self-confidence that has taken Sylvia to a prominent role as a Center For Literacy group organizer. At first, she was too shy to speak above a whisper after so many years of living in a shell. But she soon blossomed when given the job of opening the door at her learning site and greeting tutors and students. Newly acquired reading skills led to writing skills. Sylvia began to write poetry and share it with others. She also organized reading circles where students could read together on their own and share their feelings.

In 1986, Sylvia became a VISTA volunteer for the literacy program, responsible for organizing student planning committees and reading groups and staffing a computer learning site. Sylvia's activities were among those featured in a Literacy: U.S.A. documentary. Since then, this shy "slow learner" has been interviewed on talk shows, served on local panels and become a leader in her program and community.

**The Center for Literacy  
Sponsor: Jo Ann Weinberger**

*Success Stories*  
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*Somehow, I found the strength to go on learning; for myself and for my children. All my children are honor students.*

## Eugenia Newman

Eugenia's troubles began when she was placed in a remedial program in sixth grade because of reading difficulties. School officials later learned she was deaf in one ear and returned her to her regular tenth grade class. In eleventh grade, she applied for free bus transportation, as it is difficult to walk to school when you are pregnant and live at the very edge of the school district. It was denied and she dropped out.



Raised in a single-parent home, never knowing her father, Eugenia fled a demanding mother to find herself tied instead to an abusive husband. After two years of being kept at home, without even the key to her own house, she left and supported herself and her two children for the next seven years by working in a factory.

She met and married her second husband, hoping that life would be better. Though the relationship was rocky at times, it was not until they moved to her husband's home in Pennsylvania that it became intolerable. There, alone in a strange city, unwelcomed by her mother-in-law, she enrolled in the literacy program run by the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council and began working with a tutor at the local library.

At her tutor's suggestion, she enrolled in the GED class at the Connelley Skill Center. Her husband was not supportive, so she switched to sewing and continued to work with her tutor. Finally, going to a women's shelter with her four daughters, Eugenia found the strength to seek a court order protecting herself and her children. She felt confident that with her increased reading skills and a GED soon within her grasp, she could make a positive life for herself and her family.

In October 1987, a year after enrolling in a GED class, Eugenia passed the test. In November, she began a one-year job as a VISTA volunteer with the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy program. Her interest in community service led her to serve on the board of her daughters' PTA and to take an active role in helping senior citizens. Her belief in the value of education, her support and her example has paid off for her four daughters. They are all honor students.

**The Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council  
Sponsor: Donald Block**

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Left to right, Front row; Suzanne Brown, Eugenia Newman, Joyce Evans.  
Middle row; Gordon Price, Rita Nash, Iverian Johnson.  
Back Row, Linda Garnett, Sylvia Jenkins, Marjorie Aguilar. Bonnie Starcher.

*Success Stories*  
1978 1988



Sherry Royce, Project Director and Editor  
Kathy Fasano, Field Manager  
SUCCESS STORIES Past and Present  
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ROYCE & ROYCE  
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